

Germany and Russia, 1871-1914

Revision Notes on AS Level Unit 1K

Russia 1881-1914

I. The Tsarist political structure in 1881

- Russia was the largest country on Earth and had over 100 million people in the late 19th century, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population lived in European Russia. Ethnic Russians made up just less than half the population, the other largest groups Ukrainians, Poles, Byelorussians, Jews, Kirghiz and Tartars.
- Russia was an **Autocracy**. This meant that all power and law were vested in the position of the Tsar. There was no parliament or independent judiciary. Imperial edicts (ukase) were the law of the land. The Tsar was also head of the Russian Orthodox Church and its followers would look up to the Tsar as their father figure and “bow to his supreme power, not only out of fear but also out of conscience.
- Tsars ruled with the support of Ministers and advisers, they were personal appointments, There was an Imperial Council of nobles to advise the Tsar and a Committee of Ministers which ran the Departments of State.
- The Russian bureaucracy was highly stratified into different levels of authority and status – the Table of Ranks went from 1 to 14, each with their own uniform and form of address. The bureaucracy was incompetent and corrupt, promotion was more on background and length of service than ability. Initiative was stifled in a top-down model of decision making.
- The nobility who made up 10% of the population and owned 75% of the land were also expected to serve the state in keeping order.
- The burden of taxation fell on the peasantry as nobles were exempted from most payments. About 90% of revenue came from them. A Poll Tax made all eligible Russians have to pay the same rate, no matter how rich or poor they were, there were further taxes on Vodka and salt. Customs duties also contributed towards the state coffers, though often loans had to be called to finance deficits. 45% of revenue went into paying for the army, 31% was caused by the costs of the government and bureaucracy, 17% went into paying off loans and 7% was directed towards the costs of the Tsar’s palaces, court and entertainment.
- To keep an eye on suspected dissidents and revolutionaries, the Okhrana was established to monitor activity and to root out political opponents of the regime. A system of censorship and prevention of internal movement were maintained. There was no free press and books were often censored and priced out of the hands of the lower classes.
- The army maintained a strong grip on Russian society. From 1875 there was universal military service for all men over 20 for 6 years. There were about 1.5 million men in the army – the world’s largest. Peasants made up the rank and file, they were subjected to brutal discipline; the nobility had the higher ranks reserved for them, commissions could still be bought and sold. The army spent much of its time putting down uprisings within Russia. The elite Cossack regiments were much feared and acted as a personal bodyguard to the Tsar.
- There was growing opposition within Russia to Tsardom, this could come in the form of secret societies, political parties or outbursts of violence. Many opponents came from the **intelligentsia**, there were two main branches – the Slavophiles and the Westerners.
- **Slavophiles** believed in Russian culture and heritage as sacrosanct and in need of support against encroaching Western ideas. At the heart of Russian society were peasant culture and the Orthodox Church. They also saw Russia as the protector of other Slav races across Europe against persecution and domination by non-Slavs like the Ottomans and Habsburgs.

- **Westerners** believed that Russia was backward and in need of significant economic and political reform, this meant a more industrial economy and better representation of the people.
- In 1874, the **Narodniki** – Populists – went about ‘going to the people’. About 2,000 young, educated Russian men and women aimed to win over the peasantry to socialist ideas by stirring up resentment about high taxation and mortgage payments, lack of land and political oppression. They hoped to see society reorganised from the bottom-up. The move was a failure, peasants were hostile to change – they were ignorant, superstitious and loyal to the Tsar – in spite their plight. By 1874, 1,600 had been arrested.
- What was left of the movement set up **Land and Liberty** which in turn divided into: Black Partition who continued to work peacefully amongst the peasants. The **People’s Will** advocated a much more violent approach including the assassination of officials...

2. The legacy of Alexander II and his assassination.

- Alexander II (1855-1881) developed a reputation as a reformist Tsar.
- The **Crimean War** (1854-56) had highlighted the backwardness of the Russian army and the ability of the state, agriculture and industry to deal with the more developed states of Britain and France
- 1861 saw the **Emancipation of the Serfs**, this freed the peasants from land slavery and control by landowners. Peasants though were controlled in turn by the **mir** (village commune) and the ability to purchase the land they farmed was out of the reach of the masses
- **Zemstva** (Rural Councils) were established to provide limited representation to the people on local concerns, voting rights favoured the landowners over the peasants and local governors often controlled their deliberations. They were the first representative institutions in Russia and gave hope of greater reform to come – it didn’t.
- Legal reforms made the court system less corrupt but it still favoured the ruling classes against the masses
- Greater freedom was given to the press and in universities, this gave rise to the creation of an **intelligentsia** who were able to discuss reform yet unable to see any meaningful progress
- Alexander II maintained his status as autocrat, he did not wish to see greater democracy but rather sought reform from above of proven abuses in order to stave off revolution from below. He became more cautious after assassination attempts and the increased frustration of opposition groups led to his death at the hands of The **People’s Will** in 1881.
- The new Tsar Alexander III (1881-1894) was keen not to see his father’s fate happen to him – he kept himself out of public profile for much of his reign and saw a strong shift towards autocracy and oppression in terms of policy.

3. Russia under Alexander III

i) Repression

- ‘Alexander III was a true Russian. He knew his people. He would not sacrifice the truly Russian principle of autocracy,’ wrote Hugh Seton-Watson
- His conservatism was influenced by **Konstantin Pobedonostsev**, his former tutor and chief minister. Pobedonostsev held the key role of Procurator of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church (lay head) reaffirming his reactionary tendencies. He stood for autocracy over democracy – he called universal suffrage ‘a fatal error’, representative government ‘the great lie of our time’, freedom of the press ‘one of the falsest institutions of our time’. The **‘Grand Inquisitor’s’** role as tutor to the future Nicholas II meant his influence continued right up to 1905.

- The '**Reaction**' was the name given to a series measures introduced to reassert authority in Russia:
 - Proposals to draw up a constitution made by Interior Minister Loris-Melikov in the last days of Alexander II were rejected.
 - Conspirators involved in the assassination were rounded up, put on trial and five were hanged in public.
 - *The Statute of State Security, 1881* – also known as the Temporary Laws even though they lasted until 1917, Lenin described them as the 'de facto constitution of Russia':
 - set up special courts under government control and outside the existing legal framework in order to deal with the revolutionaries – this led to further controls on the courts also being imposed
 - removal from office of judges, magistrates and officials who showed sympathy with liberal ideas
 - the Okhrana, the Tsarist secret police, had its powers extended
 - censorship of the press was tightened – only Tsarist supporters like Mihail Katkov were able to push their pro-Autocratic ideas on the literate public.
 - Removal of liberal-minded ministers, e.g. Loris-Melikov was replaced as Minister of the Interior by Ignatiev (who had encouraged pan-Slavism and Russian nationalism) and then Tolstoy (a keen proponent of Russification), other reformists like Abaza and Miliutin also resigned.
 - *The University Charter of 1884 and University Statute, 1887* – brought the universities under strict government control and raised tuition fees. Chancellors, Deans and Professors had to be approved by the Education Ministry and based on 'religious, moral and patriotic orientation' – not academic achievement. Women were barred from universities, students were forbidden from gatherings of more than 5!
 - In 1889 the office of justice of the peace was replaced by that of Land Commandant (**Land Captain**) who had to be a member of the nobility. They were appointed by the Minister of Internal Affairs on the recommendation of the Provincial Governor. Their role was to oversee administrative and judicial power in the localities, overriding zemstvo and village assembly authority. Land Captains often acted as a law unto themselves, there was no inspection of them until 1904 and they had little training or supervision. There were too many aspects of the role to cover and many appointees were lazy or indifferent to the needs of the peasantry.
 - *The Zemstva Acts, 1890 and 1892* – Revision of the voting rights in rural and urban assemblies, e.g. St Petersburg franchise went down from 21,000 to 7,000 voters. Assemblies also found their actions opposed and undermined from above. Alexander III had shown, even in his father's reign that he opposed 'public' participation in government – now he could restrict this further. Rural Zemstva were put under control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and their role channelled towards social provision – education, health and transport for example – and away from political matters. Town council officials like Mayors were made State employees and, as a result, had to follow central government direction.
- Education was restricted for the poorer classes. Education Minister I.V. Delyanov opposed 'dangerous' advance in education which might bring poorer students 'out of the social environment to which they belong'. Only church dominated elementary schools showed any expansion. Illiteracy levels in Russia were 79% as late as 1897. Access to secondary schools and universities was on a quota system in which the poorer classes had few places. The poor quality of education in Russia was a brake on economic progress and identified by Westerners as one of the key areas for reform.

ii) Reinforcing the ruling class

- See above how opportunities for poorer classes were restricted and how roles like Land Captain were only open to nobles.

iii) Religious policies

- Alexander III sought to bolster the interests of the Orthodox Church which he saw as a natural supporter of the Autocracy, even in parts of the Empire not traditionally Orthodox.
- From 1883 non-Orthodox Churches were not allowed to build new places of worship or wear religious dress or publicise their faith, conversion from Orthodoxy was a crime punished by exile to Siberia
- From 1893 all Orthodox priests were made state servants and paid by the state.
- The Orthodox Church increased its role in education, it controlled primary education with the aim to make humility and obedience prevalent among the masses.
- Church courts and censorship were means by which moral authority was maintained,
- Dissenting groups and minority faiths found themselves persecuted under Alexander III, 'Old Believers', the Ukrainian 'Uniate Church' and the Armenian Church all found life made much harder. Many Catholics, Protestants, pagans and Muslims were forcibly converted to Orthodoxy.
- In spite of the support shown to the Orthodox Church, many peasants and richer members of society viewed the Church with suspicion, seeing the priests as money grabbing and hypocritical. The Church also failed to keep up to speed with the rapid urbanisation of Russia, there were too few Priests to serve the needs of the urban population.

iv) Russification

- This is the term given to the policy of suppressing local characteristics and spreading Russian characteristics to all of the Tsar's subject.
- Although not an invention of this time, it was pursued with greater vigour by Alexander III as a means of strengthening the Russian ruling class.
- Historian J.N. Westwood identified three categories of minorities within the empire: 'mainly loyal, mainly disloyal and the Jews'.
- The model of the treatment of Poland following the 1863 uprising was pursued elsewhere, the Catholic Church had land confiscated, Warsaw University was shut down (1869), Russia replaced Polish as the language of administration and more Russians were appointed to positions of authority. Symbols of independence and difference were purged.
- Similar actions followed in Ukraine, Tartar land and Georgia, the Orthodox Church played a leading role in converting subjects much to the resentment of the people.
- Efforts to russify previously loyal areas proved counter-productive. Finnish language and local autonomy in many aspects which were championed by Alexander II were reversed under his successors. Armenians found that their loyalty meant nothing as the property of the Armenian Church was confiscated and the language suppressed. In the Baltic states the imposition of Orthodoxy and Russian language showed unwelcome changes from earlier times.
- The Jews suffered most at the hands of these policies. Previous relaxation of their position was now reversed, over 600 new measures were introduced to impose social, economic and political restrictions. Alexander III was happy to encourage the Orthodox sanctioned anti-semitism with crude popular hostility to the Jews. Jews were made scapegoats for everything from the Polish rebellion to the Tsar's assassination.
- **Pogroms**, riotous acts on Jews and their property in which violence, robbery and murder were commonplace, were condoned by the authorities. A group of ultra-conservative Russian nationalists 'the **Black Hundreds**' were notorious for their violence against Jews. During the period 1881-1905 there were 215 reported pogroms, in 1905 in Odessa over 500 were killed.
- Dmitri Tolstoy, Minister of the Interior became increasingly concerned about the lawlessness of these acts, rather than out of sympathy for the victims. Bloodlust was assuaged by a series of anti-semitic measures including refusal to allow new Jewish

settlement, banning Jewish trade on Christian holy days, quotas on no more than 10% on Jews in schools and universities. 'Illegal' Jews were removed from Kiev in 1886 and Moscow in 1891 leading to harassment of all Jews in these areas.

- In response to the persecution, Jews set up the **Bund**, a revolutionary union
- which fed into broader socialist revolutionary movements in Russia, many Jews also turned to Zionism and sought establishment of a Jewish homeland. Five million others emigrated to Western Europe and North America, taking with them a hatred of Tsarism and no desire to return.
- Overall, **Russification** can be considered an ill-judged failure, it alienated over half the Tsar's subjects who resented their treatment as inferiors. The crass treatment of the Jews would lead into future revolutionary discontent.

v) Growth of opposition

- Increasing population, industrialisation, repression, religious orthodoxy, Russification and autocracy all served to increase underground opposition to the Tsarist regime.
- Increased legislation and surveillance by the **Okhrana** showed that opposition to the Tsar flourished, in some respects they encouraged the discontent.
- Mass disturbances broke out in 1888 in 332 cases throughout Russia, 51 cases were serious enough to require military intervention.
- More worrying though were the developments from the critical-thinking **intelligentsia** – see earlier – leading to the assassination of Alexander III.
- The assassination set back many reformists – all were tarred with the same brush even if their methods and aims were different. It set Russia more firmly on an autocratic course.
- The assassins became martyrs to reformed groups of **Populists** who met in secret and committed acts of terror. People's Will reformed in 1886, mainly from students in St Petersburg, their attempts to assassinate the Tsar were discovered, **Alexander Ulyanov** – Lenin's brother was hanged for his part in the conspiracy.
- Populism continued but it remained low-key and unable to make significant breakthroughs with the mass of the Russian people. It needed to wait until the development of an urban proletariat to start to have any real effect.
- **Slavophile** criticism centred on the writings of Count **Leo Tolstoy**, he opposed oppression and injustice but urged peaceful protest and the living of pure simple lives as the means to morally regenerate the country, his work was still banned by the authorities.
- There was a growing middle class in Russia which demanded better representation, through a national assembly, and improving the means of generating wealth through industrialisation.
- **The famine of 1891 - 1892** was one of the most severe agricultural crises to strike Russia during the nineteenth century. In the spring of 1891 a serious drought caused crops to fail along the Volga and in many other grain-producing provinces. The disaster came on the heels of a series of poor harvests, its impact worsened by endemic peasant poverty and low productivity. The population of the affected areas had few reserves of food and faced the prospect of mass starvation.
- Beginning in the summer of 1891, the imperial Russian government organized an extensive relief campaign. It disbursed almost 150 million rubles to the stricken provinces, working closely with the zemstvos, institutions of local self-government responsible for aiding victims of food shortages. The ministry of internal affairs established food supply conferences to coordinate government and zemstvo efforts to find and distribute available grain supplies. When massive backlogs of grain shipments snarled the railroads and threatened the timely delivery of food, the government dispatched a special agent to remedy the situation. The heir to the throne, the future Nicholas II, chaired a committee designed to encourage and focus charitable efforts. Many public-spirited Russians - Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov, Vladimir Korolenko and others - rushed into the countryside on their own initiative, setting up a large network of private soup kitchens and medical aid stations.
- The relief campaign was remarkably successful. More than 12 million people received aid, and starvation was largely averted. Mortality for 1892 rose in the sixteen famine provinces -

about 400,000 deaths above normal - much of it due to a simultaneous cholera epidemic. But compared to contemporary Indian and later Soviet famines, this loss of life was minimal. Still, the famine aroused public opinion. Many blamed the government's economic policies for causing the disaster, and its relief efforts were often unfairly criticized. Consequently, the famine proved to be an important turning point in Russian history, beginning a new wave of opposition to the tsarist regime.

- **Marxism** took time to become established in Russia, the Communist Manifesto was only translated into Russian by Bakunin in 1869 and Das Kapital was published in 1872.
- Marxism believed in 'economic determinism' where human history was driven by economic factors and the economic position determined the system of government. Different economic groups would inevitably clash and lead towards a more advanced stage of development. With a growth in capitalism within Russia, many saw this as part of the Marxist stage towards bourgeois rule away from feudal autocracy. This capitalist phase would then develop the proletariat, the urban working class, who would then move into the socialist and communist phases through conflict with the 'owners of capital'.
- In 1883, Emancipation of Labour was established by **Plekhanov**, this group translated Marxist tracts and smuggled them into Russia, here small socialist groups should concentrate on education of the urban workers. He urged co-operation with the forces of capitalism as Russia still needed to overthrow the feudal 'stage of development'.
- Marxism appealed to a small group of intellectuals rather than to the masses, their position was certainly closely monitored by the authorities who had infiltrated the movement, it was not to fully develop until Russia had undergone a revolution of capital similar to those in Western Europe.

4. Economic and Social Change within Russia

i) Reasons for Russian Economic Backwardness

- By 1881 Russian economic development still lagged far behind that of Britain, France or Germany. There had been some progress made by Alexander II in the aftermath of the Crimean War with a focus on **railway** construction in European Russia and small manufacturing.
- Russia had a very small middle class and the vast majority of the population lived and worked in the countryside, the sheer size of Russia made the co-ordination and targeting of resources and investment difficult. Ambitious Russians sought to gain favour in the military or bureaucracy rather than business. Education in Russia was not geared towards developing the skills of industry, it was for obedience to the state. There was a lack of investment capital in Russia and up to the 1880s limited will to rely on foreign investment. There was also a fear from the authorities that industrialisation would bring anti-Tsarist feelings to the fore in the expanding cities where it would be harder to maintain the autocracy, slavophiles also reinforced the concept of otherness towards Russia which provided an intellectual break on emulating the western powers.
- Russia had huge economic potential through its vast mineral and agricultural resources as well as a large and expanding population.
- Industrial development did not take off until the time of Alexander III under the guidance of Finance Ministers, Ivan **Vyshnegradsky** (1887-1892) and Sergei **Witte** (1892-1903)

ii) The Role of Witte in promoting Industry

- Vyshnegradsky and Witte followed similar policies of encouraging economic growth by: increasing indirect taxation, securing loans, reducing imports and expanding exports,

especially of grain. The **Tariff Act** of 1891 made Russian iron, machinery and cotton heavily protected from outside competition.

- The policy of grain export was controversial, it enabled Russia to gain more international currency with which to invest in industry but it also led to serious peasant hardship, especially when taxes for peasants also rose. The Famine of 1891-1892 (see above) was, in part, caused by the failure of this policy to help the farmers. It led to Vyshnegradsky being sacked – even though the State finances had been put into surplus.
- Witte picked up as Finance Minister and showed even greater ambition and direction in getting Russia modernised. His background was as a manager of the railways which he was always keen to support. He saw industrialisation as the only way in which Russia would be able to maintain its status as a great power. He hoped to see industrialisation as a means of increasing prosperity which would provide greater employment at a time of rising population and higher standards of living which would lend support to the Tsarist regime and curb the threat of revolution. He saw that Russia needed to industrialise from above – state planning was key to improving the economy – he argued that there was not a large enough capitalist class in Russia to do it independently. His policies have sometimes been referred to as ‘**state capitalism**’.
- Witte encouraged foreign expertise to work in Russia to ensure that the infrastructure for economic growth was right. He also introduced a new **Rouble** backed by gold to provide Russia with a stable currency to encourage investment.
- **Foreign investment** in Russia increased significantly in the 1880s and 1890s (and continued after the 1905 Revolution). In 1880 98 million roubles of investment was made, by 1890 it was 215 million, 1895 911 million and by 1914 there was 2 billion roubles of foreign investment made, much from France with about a third of all investment. Britain and Germany were also substantial investors as well as Belgium and the USA. The industries to benefit from the investment were mining and metallurgy, the oil industry and banking.
- The development of the Railway was seen to be a key to opening up the resources of Russia, the state took control of private railway companies in the 1880s, and by 1895 it controlled 60% of all Russia’s railways. Still, Russia had relatively few railways for the size of the country. Russia had nearly 60,000 kilometres of railways by 1905 which could be used to open up the mineral deposits of the interior and provide easy access to the ports for grain to be exported. Railway construction helped to develop other areas of the Russian economy, it was a stimulus to the iron and coal industry and provided opportunities for factories to produce and repair the complex machinery involved in the making and running of a successful railway network. Greater access by rail brought down transport costs for goods as well as passengers which made Russian manufactures and raw materials more competitive. The building of the **Trans-Siberian Railway** was the most significant symbol of the economic development of Russia under Witte. It served to stimulate further investment in Russia. By 1913 Russia had the second largest railway network in the world, 62,000 km (as opposed to 411,000 in the USA).
- Witte also sought to focus on **heavy industry** – coal, oil, iron and steel. This was a move away from earlier emphasis on textiles. There was a drive to concentrate industrial capacity and to build up larger factories (over 1,000 employees) to increase productivity. In 1887, there were 1.3 million factory workers in 30,000 factories, by 1908 there were 2.6 million factory workers but the number of factories had only increased to 40,000.
- Industrial production was focused in the big cities of St Petersburg (home of the famous **Putilov Works**) and Moscow, which benefitted from being at the heart of the railway network, there was also significant progress in the Donbas Region and on the Baltic Coast. Baku became a boom-town for oil production on the Caspian Sea, it made Russia the only significant rival to the USA in oil production.
- Although textiles still accounted for 40% of industrial output significant progress had been made in coal (3.2 to 25.4 million tonnes between 1880 and 1910), pig iron (0.42 to 3 million tonnes) and oil (0.5 to 12.1 million tonnes).
- Between 1894 and 1904 the rate of growth was 8% per annum, higher than any other country albeit from a low base. By 1897 Russia had become the **4th largest** economy in the

World. But the bulk of Russian export was still grain and levels of this fell short of Witte's predictions, during Witte's time it was argued that there was a failure to focus on increasing agricultural production which could have created a stronger internal market for Russian produced manufactures.

iii) The Role of Stolypin in reforming Agriculture

- Agriculture still accounted for the livelihood of 80-90% of the Russian population in the 1890s.
- Just before his ousting from office in 1903, Witte turned his attention towards the land but this was an area fraught with vested interests and challenges to the traditional Russian way of life, as a result little was done to improve productivity or living conditions for the peasants. The peasants were to bear the burden of higher taxes which would develop the economy but they would share in few of the benefits.
- Farming was small-scale and based upon the unit of the **mir** – towards which redemption payments were made. Farming was still using medieval methods of strip farming, crop rotation and implements used were basic (wooden plough). Grain production in Britain was four times as great per acre cultivated. In good years, income was low because there was a grain surplus to keep prices down, in a bad year they faced starvation.
- The Russian population had grown significantly (60 million in 1861 to 125 million in 1897) which put significant pressure on the land, by 1905 the average size of peasant holding was 28 acres. The government introduced some measures to encourage **internal migration** to Siberia which was being opened up by the railways – it only went a small way towards easing the pressure in European Russia.
- The government sought to encourage the creation of larger farm units through the development of Noble and Peasant **Land Banks** but this was considered too risky a venture for most peasants to take.
- Only following the upheaval and outrages of the 1905 Revolution, in which many peasants vented their frustration after many years of oppression and poverty, was significant reform proposed.
- Peter **Stolypin** believed that the Russian peasantry was the key to the future development and stability of the Tsarist regime. Peasants were naturally conservative and loyal to the Tsar and if they could become more prosperous, they would be more loyal.
- Stolypin wished to encourage the development of the richer peasant class – the **kulaks** – who would be able to adopt more productive farming practices and consolidate the land more effectively into highly productive units.
- The moves started before 1905 when the responsibility of the mir to pay taxes on behalf of the village community was removed in 1903. In the aftermath of the 1905 revolution, promises were made to end the **redemption payments** which had so impoverished many peasant communities (finalised in 1907)
- In autumn of 1906 Stolypin introduced a series of measures to appease peasant discontent and encourage greater independence from the mir. He increased the amount of State and Crown Land available for peasants to buy and granted equal rights to peasants in local administrations. The most significant reform was the right given to peasants to leave the mir and become independent farmers who could consolidate their strips into one compact farm unit. A **Land Commission** was set up to supervise this and a special Land Bank was established to encourage further peasant land ownership. There was also further encouragement of migration and settlement in Siberia.
- Stolypin's policies were partially successful. There were more land transfers and larger farms were created as many poorer peasants were encouraged to sell their land to richer ones. Hereditary ownership of land increased from 20% in 1905 to over 50% by 1914. The process though was slow and only 1.3 million out of 5 million applications had been granted. Emigration took 3.5 million peasants to Siberia where dairy farming was particularly encouraged.

- There were some setbacks, many communes still remained resistant to change, although the use of modern machinery and fertilizers was becoming more common, strip farming persisted amongst peasants fearful of losing the security of the mir. Only about 10% of the land had been consolidated. Many peasants were made poorer by the process, millions became reliant on land rented from others or made the decision to abandon agriculture and move to the cities. There was also still 50% of the land which was under noble control and this had hardly changed.

iv) The impact of reforms on the Russian Economy by 1914

- Witte's reforms did improve the Russia economy but this was not fully reflected in the standards of living for most Russians, Witte was unable to balance the **budgets** (which had more than doubled) and this restricted profits. Peasants were still suffering under the need to export grain, there was a relative neglect of smaller, lighter industry and the internal market needed to sustain the generation of economic growth failed to materialise. The industrial **depression of 1900-1908** put significant strain on the authorities, it left thousands of bitter workers out of work and demanding change, it also highlighted to the ruling class the dangers of creating a new threatening urban proletariat.
- Stolypin's reforms were not given enough time to fully develop, he died in 1911 and the war from 1914 meant that his plans had not matured and succeeded. Only about 1% of farmers had achieved kulak status by 1914. Most **peasants** still lived in poverty though there were significant variations within Russia itself. Infant mortality rates were higher than in other parts of Europe (4x higher than Germany), many peasants were found to be unfit for military service and life expectancy was about 28 years in 1900 in comparison with 45 in Britain.
- The changes made did have a strong impact on social change. Though many **nobles** were able to benefit from new opportunities in land redistribution, mineral exploitation and speculation, there were others who still struggled to make a living on their land. Russia was still a very stratified society in which the nobles held all the positions of authority within the court, military and bureaucracy.
- The **middle classes** were able to grow from their small base of about 500,000 in 1897. Professionals and factory managers were able to take advantage of government contracts and the increasing overall wealth in the country, many hoped to see increased social and political rights to go alongside their growing economic status. There was also a significant increase in those educated to serve the needs of business and administration.
- The **urban proletariat** was a key area of development during this time. 2 million factory workers in 1900 became 6 million by 1914, there was significant increase in the size of the big cities. From 1867 to 1917 the urban population of Russia had risen from 7 to 28 million (this still left over 100 million in the rural population). There was a significant influx of peasants into the cities, by 1914 $\frac{3}{4}$ of all St Petersburg residents were peasants by birth, $\frac{1}{2}$ had only arrived in the last 20 years.
- There was a lack of facilities to deal with these people. Workers accommodation was often no more than military-style barracks which were overcrowded and lacking sanitation. There were communal canteens and bathhouses. In St Petersburg, 40% of private houses had no sanitation or running water. 30,000 died of cholera in 1908-1909. Still there was a high demand and high prices for housing, it often took up over half a wage.
- These wages were low, especially during the depression years of 1900-1908 and varied depending on level of skill and gender (a third of factory workers were women). Wages failed to keep up with prices in the years up to 1914.
- There were some moves towards reform including restrictions on working hours and developing factory inspections, there were even better educational opportunities for some of the workers and their children. But as many were aware, a little education could be a dangerous thing...

iv) Political implications of economic development

- Rapid economic development followed by depression was one of the key reasons for the **1905 revolution** and its widespread effects. The change in the nature of the Russian economy had led to the development of leaders and followers opposed to the Tsarist system.
- The middle classes used what representation they could through the **Zemstva** to have a say in local affairs and were quick to question centrally imposed policies and seek further political rights. They were somewhat satisfied by the promise of a **Duma** as a result of the 1905 Revolution but felt angered by the failure to turn representation in the Duma into real political power, this made many liberals seek to support the workers against the autocracy. Keeping the middle class outside the establishment was a critical blow to the stability and power base of the Tsarist regime.
- The creation of **discontented masses** in the cities and countryside was a direct threat to authority, many were eager to follow middle class and socialist demands for reform. The urban proletariat were a particular threat due to their proximity, shared grievances and vulnerability to fluctuations in the industrial economy. The peasantry were shaken by the events of 1905 and disrupted by Stolypin's reforms into a more radicalised group though their concerns were more local and direct than a real threat to their political masters.
- Political activity in the towns and cities was kept in check before 1905 by the Okhrana, traditional peasant obedience and acceptance and the banning of strikes and political meetings. The pressure spilled over in the 1905 Revolution which became a political awakening to many in the cities, socialism was able to take root and small bands of revolutionaries were keen to exploit the discontent of the masses.
- Working protest was quelled by the repressive policies of Stolypin in the aftermath of 1905 but by 1912 the discontent erupted into increasing numbers of strikes which continued until the onset of war. The most famous of these was in the Lena Goldfields in Siberia when troops attacked a crowd of protestors killing about 250 and injuring many others.

Key Debate – Was economic development a benefit or challenge to the Russian ruling class?

Benefit

- Russia had to modernise in order to maintain its status as a great power internationally and to show progress and order internally
- The policies of Witte and Stolypin were geared towards economic change which could be co-ordinated alongside political autocracy – state planning of economic development, strengthening kulaks as loyal supporters of the Tsar
- Russia did develop spectacularly with 8% growth per annum in the 1890s and 6% p.a. in the period 1908-1914, this enriched the state and the upper classes significantly
- Economic progress was a means of satisfying large sections of Russian society without the need to impose political reforms.
- 1905 led to modest political reforms which (it can be argued) strengthened the autocracy but gave an impression of wider representation

Challenge

- Industrialisation fundamentally changes the social structure of Russia which required different political approaches the autocracy
- There was a significant change in the relationship between the governors and the governed, the growth of cities produced a moral vacuum which the Orthodox Church failed to fill leaving it as a breeding ground for revolutionary politics, the

factory owner did not have the hold over the people that the nobility traditionally had.

- The growth of a middle class was a challenge to the traditional authority of the nobility, their dynamism led to demands for greater political representation.
- Fluctuations in the economy led to severe depression and hardship for the people which the authorities could not deal with. This was a major cause of Revolution in 1905.
- 1905 showed the Tsar having to give in to popular demands and the creation of a Duma to check his absolute authority. It showed that the system was vulnerable to popular discontent.

5. Russia under Nicholas II

i) Problems with policies pursued 1894-1904

- Nicholas II was committed to the idea of autocracy and saw any concession as a sign of weakness, he was deeply influenced by his tutor **Pobedonostsev**. He did not have the intellectual capacity or the interest to make his rule a personal one and relied upon the advice of ministers, he could often get bogged down in petty issues (midwife appointments, for example). He lacked confidence in political issues and could not assert the level of authority needed in a time of shifting economic, social and political change.
- During his rule there was an increase in political awareness and a growing discontent with the nature of Tsarist rule, the 1891-92 Famine had a profound impact on many previously loyal supporters of the regime. There was a mistrust of the capabilities of the **bureaucracy** to serve the needs of the people and a call for greater representation.
- Although this period was one of economic development (under Witte) and continued oppression by the **Okhrana**, there were more clearly identified opponents of the regime emerging.
- There were the Liberals. This group favoured the development of parliamentary institutions to meet the demands of a newly industrialised Russia. Peter **Struve** was the key inspiration behind the party founded in 1903 (Union of Liberation). He argued that 'peaceful evolution' was needed in which a constitution would protect the interests of workers and the middle classes. In the winter of 1904 the Union set up meetings and banquets in which the call for a constitutional government rang out, though its message was lost amongst the wider civilian discontent.
- Then there were the **Socialist Revolutionaries**. This group had emerged out of the previous Populist movement and the famine of 1891-92 highlighted the need for reform of the rural economy, the movement was strong in universities and in 1901 the Education Minister Bogolepov was assassinated by a student. In the same year the Socialist Revolutionary Party was founded by Victor **Chernov** from a range of populist groups. They added Marxist theory to populist ideals to create a very 'Russian' revolutionary movement. It lumped the peasants and industrial workers together as the 'labouring poor' and argued for the end of autocracy and major land redistribution – land 'socialisation' as they called it. The party was very active in the 1905 disturbances and even had its own combat wing to carry out politically motivated sabotage and assassinations (victims included Plehve and Stolypin). Activity between 1905 and 1909 resulted in over 6,000 terrorist acts, of which half were fatal. Okhrana infiltration resulted in high levels of arrest and execution, over 2,500 actually killed. Between 1899 and 1908, the leader of the combat organisation Yevno **Azef** was actually a police informer in the pay of the Okhrana and he betrayed many of his colleagues until he was exposed and forced to flee to Germany.
- And also the **Social Democrats**. From its origins in Plekhanov's **Emancipation of Labour**, Marxism was slow to develop in Russia due to Okhrana activity, censorship and the lack of an urban working class. The development of industry in the 1890s provided the impetus for radical Marxist ideas to develop. From illegal trade unions, discussion groups

and workers' organisations a meeting in 1898 brought them together in the First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party – with 9 delegates. Early attempts at co-ordination were broken up by the Okhrana and most of its members lived in European exile. Lenin became a key member of the Committee through his newspaper **Iskra** 'Spark' and the pamphlet 'What is to be done'. Apart from a brief period in 1905, Lenin was exiled from Russia between 1897 and 1917. At the Brussels and London Second Congress, the SDs split between those wishing to produce a small revolutionary cadre to lead the proletarian revolution favoured by Lenin and those seeking to broaden the party's support base and develop socialist ideas through education and co-operative action with other organisations. This was the split between **Bolsheviks** (led by **Lenin**) and **Mensheviks** (led by Julius **Martov**), by 1906 the split had become so hardened that there were effectively two parties.

- There were further famines in Russia in the years 1897, 1898, 1900 and 1902 which made lives for the peasants even harder, there was little respite from the high taxation imposed by Witte to pay for industrialisation. There were peasant uprisings in Poltava and Kharkov in 1902 which resulted in widespread arson. These set a pattern which continued over the next few years. The initial government response was repression with peasants flogged, arrested, exiled or shot – Stolypin was a leading exponent of terror
- In the cities the rise of the urban proletariat with their associated discontents became a breeding ground for the Social Democrats, especially after the start of depression in 1902. **Strikes** in industrial areas rose from 17,000 in 1894 to around 90,000 in 1904. Strikes often led to riots and the involvement of the police or army.
- Calls for the legalisation of trade unions and to promote legitimate channels for the airing of grievances led to the creation of **Zubatov Unions** (named after the Moscow chief-of-secret police) with the acceptance of Grand Duke Sergei Romanov in 1900. The aim was to lure workers away from more radical organisations; the movement failed, one Zubatov union was involved in a general strike in Odessa, Zubatov himself was dismissed and exiled. Another Zubatov union was founded in St Petersburg by **Father Gapon** in 1904 and approved by Minister of the Interior Plehve (just before he was assassinated by a Socialist Revolutionary).

ii) The Russo-Japanese war and causes of the 1905 Revolution

- In order to distract attention away from increasing tensions within Russia, caused by the economic depression, over-taxation of the peasants and lack of political representation, Interior Minister Vyacheslav **Plehve** is claimed to have persuaded the Tsar that a 'short swift victorious war' against Japan would restore the prestige and authority of the regime.
- Japan and Russia were both concerned to develop their interests in the Manchurian region of China, Russia had a 25-year lease on **Port Arthur** but the Japanese were unwilling to accept the status quo. Angry diplomatic liaison in which neither side were willing to concede led to Japan's attack on Port Arthur in January 1904. The Russians were temporarily united in patriotic sentiment.
- The Tsar and the Russian people generally underestimated the strength of their enemy, they dismissed the Japanese as *makaki* (little monkeys) and considered their European pedigree as a certainty of success. The problems of waging war at a distance of 6,000 miles and failure to appreciate the level of development Japan had made industrially and militarily over the past 50 years led to a series of early defeats.
- This, in turn, led to increased discontent within Russia, the incompetence of the military operation created further waves of protest, Plehve was assassinated, Polish nationalists came out to celebrate Russia's humiliation. In November 1904 representatives of the zemstva met in private to ask Mirsky (Plehve's replacement) for a National Assembly, Nicholas II was unwilling to move on this issue and granted only a limited expansion of rights for the zemstva.
- On December 20 1904, Port Arthur surrendered to the Japanese, war had increased the economic problems in the country by disrupting the transport system, creating shortages and raising prices. At the start of 1905, the people of St Petersburg were ready to take to the streets...

- Further failure came when Russian land forces were defeated at the Battle of **Mukden**, 90,000 Russian soldiers were killed.
- In May, following a journey from St Petersburg around the foot of Africa, the Russia Baltic Fleet was defeated by Japan at the Battle of **Tsushima**.
- With defeat on land and at sea, Russia sued for peace through US negotiations. Witte was sent to negotiate the **Treaty of Portsmouth** on 23 August, here Russia conceded territory and influence in the Far East.

iii) The 1905 Revolution and the threat to Tsardom

- On 3 January the **Putilov Works** went out on strike, a sign for others to join them, in total 150,000 were able to join them.
- On 9 January **Father Gapon** decided to channel discontent in the peaceful process of a petition and march to the Winter Palace, the appeal was broad and sympathetic to the position of the Tsar but asked for better working conditions, better representation and better human rights.
- Gapon was told to abandon the march but decided to go ahead, believing the Tsar to be sympathetic to their needs but ill-advised by courtiers. There were 12,000 troops drafted into the city to confront the 150,000 marchers. Unarmed, singing hymns and carrying icons and symbols of Tsarist reverence. Cavalry stopped the marchers before they reached the Winter Palace, a charge left 40 dead and hundreds injured. About 150 more were killed when troops opened fire on the marchers. In the panic many protesters kept going towards the Palace in the face of armed cavalry and artillery units, they refused to disperse and were fired upon. By the end of '**Bloody Sunday**' there were hundreds dead and wounded (official estimates put the figure a lot slower).
- 'Bloody Sunday' set off a series of protests throughout rural and urban Russia, Grand Duke Sergei was assassinated, Nicholas was forced into proposing the establishment of a consultative assembly even though he was still reasserting authority. In March, Zemstva representatives met in Moscow. Trade Unions developed in all the major industries. In May the '**Union of Unions**' was set up from liberal professional unions demanding western style democratic rights. Peasants met in Moscow for the All Russian Union of peasants. It seemed that the Tsar's authority had collapsed.
- In June and July the 'Union of Unions' prepared for a general strike, the **Battleship Potemkin** mutinied in the Black Sea and peasant unrest continued to spread.
- At the end of July, **Bulygin** – the Minister of Internal Affairs – published new plans for constitutional reform but this was rejected by the Zemstva Conference in September, waves of strikes continued after peace terms had been announced. It seemed that authority in the countryside, among the urban workers, among the middle classes had collapsed. Different nationalities sought to gain greater freedom, right-wing death squads – the **Black Hundreds** – went around killing Jews and socialists. By October there was a general strike throughout Russia.
- Nicholas was forced to make concessions, **Witte** was instrumental in drawing up the **October Manifesto** which finally showed the Tsar willing to restore his position by making concessions. The manifesto granted basic human freedoms of conscience, speech, assembly and union. It allowed the people to participate in the Duma through free elections and to make that Duma the **legislative assembly** of Russia.
- The Revolution seemed to have been quelled by the actions of Witte, celebrations broke out in the streets, the general strike was called off. Only small pockets of revolutionaries like Lenin and Trotsky could see that there was little intent by Nicholas to live by the letter or the spirit of the October Manifesto.
- The **counter-revolution** swiftly reasserted authority – under the command of **Trepov**, the military governor of St Petersburg, returning troops were drafted in to shoot striking workers back into the factories, pogroms against the Jews intensified, ringleaders of rural and urban strikers were arrested or shot. Revolutionary **Soviets** in St Petersburg and Moscow were disbanded with violence, leaders like **Trotsky** were arrested and exiled to

Siberia. By late-December the greatest unrest in the cities was over and military suppression of rural unrest intensified.

iv) The establishment of the Dumas and restoration of Autocracy

- The new Duma took shape over the coming months, it would have two chambers – the **State Duma** made up of elected representatives, the elections were based on different classes and weighted in favour of the nobility, deputies were elected for five years at a time. The upper chamber or **State Council** was half-elected by the zemstva and half appointed by the Tsar. Both houses had equal law-making power, all laws needed to pass both houses and get the Tsar's approval.
- Government was to be appointed by the Tsar – not the Duma. It was responsible to the Crown alone
- Five days before the first Duma met, the Tsar issued the **Fundamental Laws** (23 April) which re-asserted autocratic authority. It stated that supreme autocratic power rested with the Tsar and all should submit by duty as well as fear. It also gave the Tsar powers to rule by decree and allow the Tsar to dissolve the Duma when he wishes. The Tsar still had power over the military and the sole power to declare war, make peace and negotiate with other nations. Military and court expense was still in the Tsar's hands. Control over government appointments, appeals in the courts and authority over the Orthodox Church all showed autocratic authority was maintained.
- There were four Dumas in the period 1906-1914. The first election held in early 1906 saw the Bolsheviks and SRs refuse to take part, as did groups of right-wing nationalists. This resulted in the return of a predominantly liberal assembly, with **Kadets** (Constitutional Democrats led by Milyukov) having the most seats followed by the Trudoviks (peasant representatives who were more moderate than the SRs). Peasants made up more representatives than any other group. This '**Duma of National Hopes**' met on 1 May 1906 in an atmosphere of hope and anticipation which was quickly crushed by the Tsar's reluctance to allow it real power.
- Witte was forced to resign (as Head of the Council of Ministers) soon after and replaced by Ivan **Goremykin**, a conservative. The ability to secure a loan of over 2 billion gold francs from France in April 1906 gave the new government the ability to avoid close financial control and power from the Duma. The Duma's first act was an '**Address to the throne**' which would strengthen its authority by being able to appoint ministers, grant an amnesty to political prisoners, direct male suffrage and seizure of land among other aspects. The Tsar considered this position 'totally inadmissible'. The Duma then passed a 'no confidence' vote in the government which was ignored until ten weeks later when the Duma was dissolved and Goremykin was replaced by **Stolypin** in July 1906.

v) The role of Stolypin

- Stolypin had developed a reputation as a ruthless hardliner in crushing opposition to the Tsar. He now sought to deal with the challenge of the Duma.
- Incensed by their dismissal in summer 1906, 200 delegates met in Vyborg, Finland and appealed to the public to refuse the payment of taxation and acceptance of military service. The **Vyborg Appeal** was met with public apathy and it proved to be a crucial mistake from the Kadets. All signatories were disenfranchised (could not stand again for the Duma) and given three month prison sentences. This deprived them of the core of their support.
- Stolypin then sought to influence the make-up of the Second Duma (Feb-June 1907) by supporting the **Octobrists** (moderate conservatives supported by wealthy landowners and industrialists). This only served to double their representation to 42 out of over 300. The bulk of the seats went to the left-wing parties, as the SRs and the SD's (both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) decided to stand. In this '**Duma of National Anger**' there were few supporters of the constitutional system and this served to paralyse it as a political force.

- Stolypin could not manage to work a majority for his agricultural reforms and asked for **emergency powers** from the Tsar. The Duma's deputies refused to ratify this move and Stolypin proceeded to accuse the SRs of attempting to assassinate the Tsar and arrest them (in spite of immunity from arrest that Deputies had). Then the Duma was again dismissed. The SD members arrested and exiled and an emergency law was brought in to **change the electoral system** – this made the nobility and gentry significantly more represented in the Duma.
- Stolypin continued with his ruthless programme of stamping out revolution through the execution and exile of terrorists and known opponents of the regime. The noose became '**Stolypin's necktie**'.
- The Third Duma (Nov 1907- June 1912) found right-wing parties like the Octobrists and Rightists gain significantly, the Kadets and Socialists found their support significantly diminished by the new franchise system. The Duma was known as the '**Duma of Lords and Lackeys**' by its radical critics. With this Duma, Stolypin had the pliant and deferential assembly he wanted, it was able to pass 2,200 out of 2,500 laws put before it. Still, it was not all submission to higher authority. There were disputes over naval estimates, extension of primary education and local government reform – all of which had an effect on the nobility and traditional Russian values. By 1911, the Octobrists (led by **Guchkov**) had become opponents of the Tsarist regime and the Duma was suspended twice to allow emergency legislation to pass. The Third Duma ran its course of five years and could still be considered the most successful of Russia's parliaments.
- In 1911, Stolypin was **assassinated in Kiev** by an SR terrorist/Okhrana agent, whether his reforms had alienated him from conservative circles around the Tsar or his actions had roused the rightful indignation of the masses for failure to represent their interests is the main motive, his death ended the more progressive and modernising elements in Russian government. The regime would only outlast him by six more years.

vi) Growing political discontent by 1914

- The Fourth Duma (November 1912- October 1917) was a close facsimile of the Third but with a decline in support for the moderate Octobrists. This meant that right-wing groups continued to surrender to the will of the government. This was known as the 'Duma of Doom and Gloom'. The new Chief Minister **Kokovtsov** (1911-1914) said 'Thank God we still have no parliament.' The Duma was ignored in many aspects of policy and it was too divided to reassert its authority. It seemed that the work of Stolypin had led to the restoration of traditional autocratic rule in Russia.
- Disillusionment with the Duma led to workers, in particular, seeking to redress their grievances more directly through strikes, riots and terrorism. Organised protest was still difficult due to the close supervision of the Okhrana and the division of the revolutionary groups. Popular **Pan-Slavist** policies were also a means of deflecting the workers away from their own problems and channelling their interests towards Russian opportunities in the Balkans.
- Following the **Lena Goldfields Massacre** there was an increase in worker agitation, from 1912 to 1914 there were 9,000 strikes involving 3 million workers. The **Bolsheviks** succeeded in taking over trade unions in St Petersburg and Moscow and encouraging protest, their newspaper Pravda sold over 40,000 copies a day.
- At the same time, the ruling **Romanov** dynasty seemed to become more detached from reality, in the 1913 celebrations of 300 years of Romanov rule they looked every part the medieval despots they were. The level of adulation and celebration witnessed during the carefully orchestrated celebrations convinced Nicholas that the people were on his side and happy to submit to autocratic rule. The bonds between ruler and ruled were much closer to breaking point.
- The distance from reality was epitomised by the rise of **Rasputin**, mystic, holy man, healer, adviser and friend. Employed to care for the haemophiliac **Tsarevich Alexei**, he soon found his closeness to the Tsar and his wife to be a position of great influence. Through

bribes, gifts and sexual favours, he became an important point of access for any seeking to gain favour with the Tsar. He had influence over appointments and incurred the anger of more established courtiers. Nicholas was oblivious to the criticisms and scandal associated with Rasputin, he dismissed any challenge to his own choice of adviser. It was a poor move as it incurred the wrath of many in the inner circle of the Russian establishment, with such corruption and division at the top, there would be limited support for the Tsar when the next crisis came.

Key debate – Would the Tsarist autocracy have survived had it not been for the outbreak of World War I?

It would have survived:

- The modernisation of Russia was leading to significant improvements in wealth and power for a range of interest groups. As Russia got richer then there would be fewer dissenting voices
- Agricultural reform could have succeeded with enough time and it would have made Russia more productive and capable of sustaining its own prosperity
- There was no great threat to the autocracy and most people seem to have been satisfied with the development of the Dumas as a means of giving limited representation.
- The state was still strong, the Okhrana was effective in marginalising opposition and the army was growing in strength and fully capable of quelling unrest.

It would not have survived:

- There was not enough strong leadership from the top, Tsar Nicholas II was weak and incapable of tough decision making, any ministers with talent and modernising vision were marginalised (like Witte) or killed (like Stolypin)
- The growing industrial economy was creating more problems than it solved, neither Alexander III or Nicholas II appreciated the significant social, economic and political consequences of modernisation.
- The failure of the Dumas to fully represent the needs of the people had been clearly demonstrated by 1914 and this resulted in increasing direct action against the government and big business, this would only have got worse for the regime in time.
- The autocratic system could not withstand the development of wealth, opportunity and education that modernisation afforded. The more advanced Russia was to become the more backward its political system was seen to be, power was moving away from traditional authority like the army, Orthodox Church and nobility into the hands of industrialists and workers who felt their role undervalued and in need of stronger representation.
- The unwillingness of the Tsar to accept moderate reform by political means meant that the only channel available to reformers was violent and revolutionary, oppression could only hold off anger, only reform could make it go away.